

Sharing the Story About Jesus



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Ephesians 2:1–3; 1 John 1:1–4; Mark 5:18–20; Hebrews 10:19–22; Galatians 2:20.

MEMORY VERSE: “I write this letter to you who believe in the Son of God. I write so that you will know that you have eternal life now” (1 John 5:13, ERV).



We must show that every Bible teaching is about Jesus and shows His love too. Then people will want to accept what the Bible says.

AS WE SAID ALREADY, the most powerful proof for the Good News is a changed life. People may argue with your beliefs. They may disagree with your Bible teachings. They may say that you do not understand the Bible. But who can argue with your personal story about what Jesus means to you and what He has done in your life?

Witnessing is sharing what we know about Jesus. Witnessing is letting other people know what Jesus means to us and what He has done for us. Some people think that witnessing is only about trying to prove what they believe is right and show that other people's beliefs are wrong. But if we talk about Bible truth that way, we will not win many people to Jesus. Our sharing about Jesus must come from a heart that has been changed by His mercy and forgiveness, His love and His truth. Then other people will see how the truth we believe has changed our lives. That is the best reason why we must live what we believe.

We must show that every Bible teaching is about Jesus and shows His love too. Then people will want to accept what the Bible says.

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR OUR TESTIMONY (Ephesians 2:1–3)

As Christians, we all have a personal story to tell. This story is about how Jesus changed our lives and what He has done for us.

How did we behave before we knew Jesus? What becomes ours when we accept Him?

A. Our life before we knew Jesus (Ephesians 2:1–3).

B. Our life after we knew Jesus (Ephesians 2:4–10).

Wow! Look at how much we changed! Before we knew Jesus, “[our] spiritual lives were dead because of [our] sins” (Ephesians 2:1, ICB). We “used to live as sinners” and “followed the ways of this world [the people on this earth and their ways of life]” (Ephesians 2:2, NlrV). “We did all the things our bodies and minds wanted” (Ephesians 2:3, ERV). “God was angry with us like he was with everyone else” (Ephesians 2:3, NlrV). Before we knew Jesus, we were lost.

Maybe we thought we were happy. But deep inside we were sad and felt that we needed something more to give our lives meaning. Then we came to Jesus. His love changed everything. Now in Jesus we are truly alive. That is because “God gave us new life with Christ” (Ephesians 2:5, ICB). God did this because He “loves us deeply. He is full of mercy” (Ephesians 2:4, NlrV). “He did this so that for all future time he could show the very great [endless; having no limit] riches [plenty] of his grace [loving-favor]. He shows that grace by being kind to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:7, ICB). In Jesus, life has new meaning. As John says, “Life was in him, and that life was the light for all people” (John 1:4, NlrV).

Read Ephesians 2:10. What does this verse tell us about how important good works are to the Christian’s faith? At the same time, we believe that people are saved “because of their faith. They are not saved by obeying the law” (Romans 3:28, NlrV). If we are not saved by works, then why do we need them? What part do good works have in our lives?



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OUR PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT JESUS (1 John 1:1–4)

John and James were the sons of Zebedee. James and John also were known as the “ ‘Sons of Thunder’ ” (Mark 3:17, NIV). Jesus is the One who gave James and John this name. John had a bad temper. He got angry fast. The Bible tells us about the time when John got mad. Jesus and His followers traveled across Samaria. They tried to find a place to stay for the night in a village. But the Samaritans did not like the Jews. So, the Samaritans did not offer Jesus and His followers a place to stay anywhere in their village.

James and John think they knew how to solve the problem of the Samaritans’ bad behavior. James and John say, “ ‘Lord, do You want us to speak [pray] so fire will come down from heaven and burn them up as Elijah did?’ ” (Luke 9:54, NIV). Jesus’ answer surprises James and John. Jesus scolds them. They all leave the village quietly. Jesus’ way is the way of love, not force.

By being around Jesus, John’s temper changed. John became a loving, kind, and gentle spirit. In John’s first letter, the Greek word for “love” is written more than 40 times.



The strongest proof of Christianity is a changed life.

Read 1 John 1:1–4; 1 John 3:1; 1 John 4:7–11; and 1 John 5:1–5. What do these verses tell you about John’s personal story about Jesus? What changes happen in John’s life because of his friendship with Jesus?

There is a very important law of life. Ellen G. White talks about it: “Our using force goes against God’s government. God wants people to serve Him only because they love Him. Love cannot be commanded. Love cannot be won by force or power. Only love can cause love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, page 22, adapted.

When we give our lives fully to Jesus, His love will fill us. Other people will see this love. The strongest proof of Christianity is a changed life. Does this mean we will not make any mistakes or fail to show the love and mercy of Jesus? No. A changed life means that Jesus’ love will be seen in our lives. It will be a blessing to the people around us.

How well do you show the love of Jesus to other people? What does your answer tell you about yourself?

TELLING THE STORY ABOUT JESUS (Mark 5:18–20)

Who are the first people that Jesus sends to share the Good News? They are not His long-time followers. The first people Jesus sends had been filled with demons. Before Jesus came into their lives, they scared everyone in the countryside and filled their hearts with fear.

The demons made one of the men strong enough to break the chains that held him. Then this man screamed in an awful voice. He cut his own body with sharp stones. The cries of these men show the deeper pain in their spirits (Matthew 8:28, 29; Mark 5:1–5).

But then these two men meet Jesus. Their lives are changed forever. Jesus causes the demons to leave their bodies. The demons enter a herd of pigs. Then the pigs jump off a cliff into the sea (Matthew 8:32–34; Mark 5:13, 14).

Read Matthew 8:28–34. What happens to these men? What do the townspeople find when they come to see what happened?

The men who had been filled with demons are changed by Jesus' power. The townspeople find the men sitting at Jesus' feet. The two men listen to every word Jesus says. Just so you know, Matthew's book says there were two men that Jesus saved from demons. But Mark's story tells us about only one of them. The important thing to understand is that Jesus made both men new. He healed their bodies, minds, hearts, and spirits.

Read Mark 5:18–20. As you can see from the verses, the changed man wants to stay with Jesus. But what does Jesus send him to do?

"These men heard Jesus' teaching for only a short time. They never heard Jesus preach one sermon. Jesus' followers had been with Jesus daily. So, they knew how to teach the people. But not these men. At the same time, their changed lives were living proof that Jesus was the Savior. These men told what they knew. They told what they had seen, heard, and felt of Jesus' power. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been changed by God's loving-favor."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 340, adapted. The personal stories that these men told about Jesus helped to get the people ready in Decapolis to accept Jesus' teachings.



The cries of the two men show the deeper pain in their spirits.

HAVING A FIRM TRUST AND A SURE FAITH IN GOD TO SAVE US (Hebrews 10:19–22)

Read 1 John 5:11–13; Hebrews 10:19–22; and 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2. What hope do these verses give us about our everlasting life? Why can we say with firm trust and sure faith that God has saved us?



Jesus lives in our hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. Because of this, we have the gift of everlasting life today!

If we do not believe that Jesus has saved us, we cannot share this faith with someone else. We cannot share what we do not have ourselves. There are wonderful, kind Christians who always live in fear. They wonder if they will ever be good enough for God to save them. As a wise, old preacher said, “When I look at myself, I see no way of being saved. When I look at Jesus, I see no way I can be lost.” The Lord’s words were true when He said them, and they are true now: “All you who live anywhere on earth, turn to me and be saved. I am God. There is no other God” (Isaiah 45:22, NIRV).

Our Lord wants to save us. What is more, He freely gives us the gift of everlasting life. He wants this gift to fill our hearts with joy. He wants us to be made clean from sin and guilt. He wants us to be made right with Him. Paul says, “We have been made right with God because of our faith. So we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1, ERV). Paul also says that we can trust that “anyone who is in Christ Jesus is not judged guilty” (Romans 8:1, ERV). John tells us that “whoever has the Son has life. But the person who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12, ICB).

By faith we accept Jesus. Then He lives in our hearts by the power of His Holy Spirit. Because of this, we have the gift of everlasting life today! Does that mean we can never lose the gift of God’s loving-favor and saving mercy? Of course not! (Read 2 Peter 2:18–22; Hebrews 3:6; and Revelation 3:5).

We always have the free choice to turn away from God. But why would we ever want to? We now know His love. We understand more and more why He died for us. So, we will look each day for the chance to share with people the loving-favor that we have in Jesus.

Do you believe that you are saved in Jesus? If yes, why are you sure? Where in the Bible do you find reasons for your trust? If you are not sure, why are you not sure? How can you find the firm trust that you need?

NEWS WORTH SHARING (Galatians 2:20)

“I have been put up on the cross to die with Christ [Jesus]. I no longer live. Christ lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live by putting my trust in the Son of God. He was the One Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20, NLV).

Sure, there are things we must give up when we accept Jesus. He asks us to give up these things. Jesus makes plain what we must do to follow Him: “ ‘If anyone wants to follow me, he must say “no” to the things he wants. Every day he must be willing even to die on a cross, and he must follow me’ ” (Luke 9:23, ICB). Death on a cross is a painful death. When we give our lives to Jesus, our old lives are put to death on the cross (read Romans 6:6). That is painful. It is painful at times to give up the things we want and lifelong habits. But the rewards are worth any pain we must suffer.

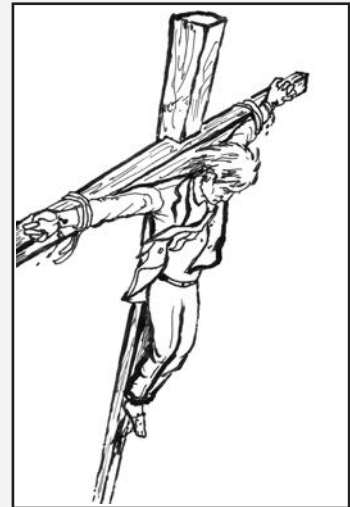
Stories about what Jesus has done for us can change lives. These stories are not about what we give up for Jesus. They are about what Jesus does for us.

The history of Christianity is filled with stories about people who gave up many things for Jesus. Were these people trying to earn everlasting life by their acts? No. Nothing we do can earn us favor with God. These men and women understood what Christ did for them. So, they were willing to give up everything for Jesus and follow Him.

Our personal stories about Jesus are always about what Jesus does for us. Read John 1:12; John 10:10; John 14:27; and 1 Corinthians 1:30. List some of the gifts of God’s loving-favor that you find in the verses above.

As you read the verses above, think about what Jesus has done for you. Maybe you have been a loyal Christian your whole life. Or maybe you came to God after a powerful experience changed you. Think about how good Jesus has been to you and the peace and happiness He gives you. Think about the times He gave you the strength to meet hardships and difficult times in life.

What has Jesus asked you to give up for Him? What have you learned from your experiences? How can what you learned be a blessing to other people?



When we give our lives to Jesus, our old lives are put to death on the cross.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Mark 5:25–34. “The crowd close to Jesus does not feel any special healing power when they touch Him. But the woman who reaches out her hand to touch Jesus believes that she will be made whole. So, she feels Jesus’ special healing power. The same thing is true in spiritual things. What if we talk about religion in a careless way? Or what if we pray with no real hunger in our spirits? Or what if we have no living faith? Then our talk, prayers, and faith will have no power. What if we believe that Jesus has the power to save? That is not enough to bring healing to our souls. Saving faith is not simply knowing the truth. . . . It is not enough to believe **about** Jesus. We must believe **in** Him. We must accept Jesus as our personal Savior. That is the only faith that will heal us. By faith we accept Jesus’ holy life as our own. . . .

“God chooses us to show Jesus to the people on this earth. Sure, we must believe what the Bible tells us about God’s loving-favor. But our personal stories about our own experiences are even more powerful proof. We are witnesses for God. As His witnesses, we show that God’s power works in us. There is no other person the same as you or me on the earth. Each one of us is special and different from everyone else. So, we each have an experience that is different from everyone else’s too. God wants us to praise Him. The praise we give God will not be the same as anyone else’s. When we give God praise and are filled with Jesus, then our praise will have power that will work to save people.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 347, adapted.



“The woman who reaches out her hand to touch Jesus believes that she will be made whole.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What makes a personal story about Jesus exciting and interesting? Read Paul’s personal story that he told to Agrippa (Acts 26:1–23). What reason does Paul give for his personal story?
- ② Why do you think our personal stories about Jesus are so powerful? How do you answer the question: “What do I do if I have not had the same experience as you? Why should I follow Jesus?”
- ③ What should you **not** say when you share your personal story with someone who does not believe in Jesus?
- ④ Think about being sure that we are saved. Why is this such an important part of our Christian experience? How can we be sure that we are saved?

THE LAST WORDS OF A DYING WOMAN

Tomasz Karauda is a 28-year-old Seventh-day Adventist doctor in Poland. A woman was brought to him from another part of the hospital where he worked. Tomasz was asked to sign a paper saying that the woman was dead. But there was one problem. The woman was alive.

The woman looked dead when the nurse brought her to Tomasz. The woman came from the part of the hospital for patients who were very sick and needed a lot of care. That part of the hospital was very crowded. The doctor there could do nothing more to save the woman. So, he sent her out so that he could free up a bed for another patient who badly needed care. A nurse asked Tomasz if the dying woman could stay in the part of the hospital where he worked.

That part of the hospital did not have any free beds. So Tomasz placed a bed in the hall. He laid the woman on it. Then he pulled up a chair next to it and talked to the woman for the next two hours.

The woman had lung cancer. She had smoked for many years. As she talked, her body started to grow hard and cold with death. The blood in her body pooled in her lower back. Her skin turned pale as her blood drained into the larger veins in her body. Nothing could be done to save her.

"I never saw anything that looked the same as this in my life," Tomasz said. "The woman was dead. But she was sitting in the wheelchair. And she was talking with me!"

The woman said she was very sorry for her life choices.

"I spent my whole life smoking," she said. "I wish I could go back and live my life over again."

Tomasz felt as if he was in the middle of the Bible story about the thief on the cross. He held the woman's hand.

Finally, the woman stopped talking. That is when Tomasz signed the paper saying that she was dead.

"Being a Christian doctor is a very responsible job," Tomasz said. He had studied at a public medical school. "No one taught us in medical school what to do or say when something this sad happens."

Tomasz says it is helpful to take someone's hand and offer words of hope. But other times, he says, "the only thing you can do is hold someone's hand and pray for him or her in your heart."

The people on this earth are dying in sin. Many times, death sets in. Nothing can be done to save them. What will you do at that time for the dying? Will you hold their hands? Will you pray for them and with them? Will you offer them hope?



"The woman was dead. But she was sitting in the wheelchair. And she was talking with me!"

